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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Father God, author of liberty, as our governmental leaders face grave questions and perplexing problems so vitally affecting national welfare and world concord, we bow in reverence in Your presence. We acknowledge that it is because of You that we live and move and have our being.

Strengthen the leaders of our executive, judicial, and legislative branches to make their utmost contribution to the healing of the tangled tragedy of our troubled world. Through the lips that speak in this forum of freedom, Lord, speak to our Nation and world so that Your will may be accomplished on Earth. Heal the divisions which shorten the arm of our national might in this decisive season. Help our lawmakers to be patient and considerate one with another, as You give them reverence for truth and a passion for justice.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 1, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BURRIS thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following the remarks of the two leaders, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3590, the health care reform legislation. That will be until 11:30 a.m., for debate only. The Republicans will control the first 30 minutes, the majority will control the next 30 minutes. Any remaining time will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

At 11:30 a.m., the Senate will turn to executive session to debate the nomination of Jacqueline Nguyen to be a U.S. District Judge for the Central District of California. The vote on confirmation of that nomination will occur at 12 noon today. That will be the first vote today.

The Senate will recess from 12:30 to 2:15 p.m., to allow for our weekly caucus luncheons. Following the recess, the Senate will resume consideration of the health care reform legislation. Additional votes are expected this afternoon in relation to the health care legislation.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, here are two truths about the historic health care reform bill that is now before this body. First, it will save money, it will save lives, and it will save Medicare. Again, the legislation before this body will save lives, money, and Medicare.

While this is a pretty good start toward that, the second fact is, there is always room for improvement for this bill. Of course, that is what the legislative process is all about. Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI of Maryland has offered an amendment that does both. Her proposal would improve this bill by making sure women get, at no cost, the preventive screenings they need to stay healthy. These are important screenings that can catch potential problems as early as possible and that will save lives and save money.

Health care premiums rise higher and higher every year. The insurance industry this year has already raised insurance rates an average of 10 percent—an average. Of course, this is far faster than incomes in this country, and that is an understatement. As this happens, more and more women are simply skipping the important preventive care they need. Why? They are skipping screenings for cervical cancer, they are skipping screenings for breast cancer, they are skipping screenings for pregnancy. They are even skipping annual checkups and doctor visits that could flag serious problems, such as postpartum depression and domestic violence.

Why is this happening? Do women simply care less about their well-being? Of course not. Are diseases on the decline? Quite to the contrary. The only reason women are putting off going to the doctor is because, in our broken health care system, it simply costs too much to stay healthy.

Senator MIKULSKI's amendment also makes clear that the decision of whether and when to get a mammogram

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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